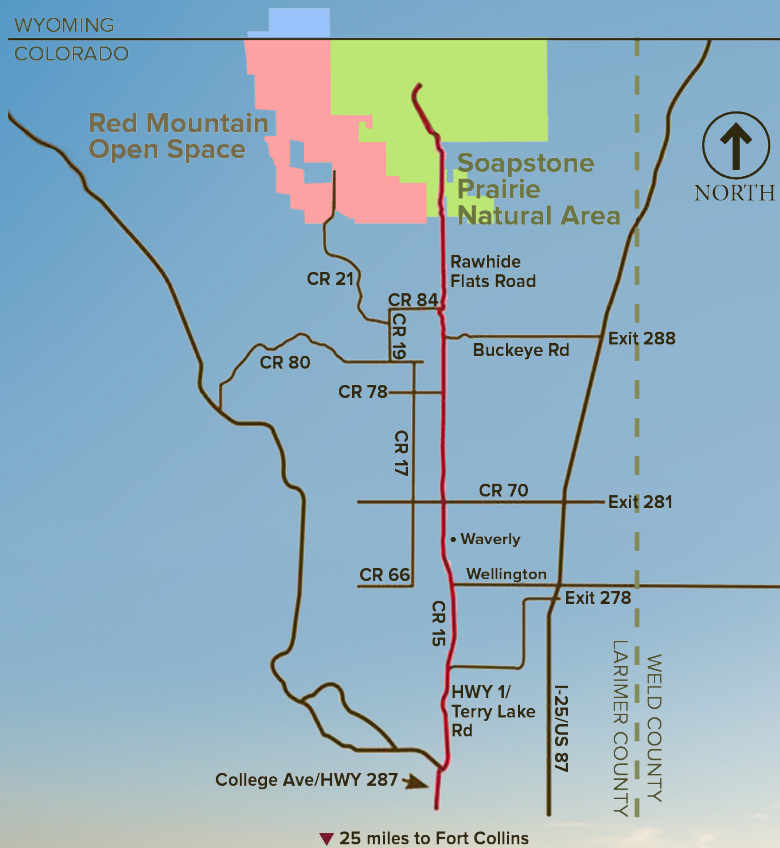


PRESERVING AN ICON



For millennia, American bison herds roamed the Great Plains by the millions – until overhunting drove them nearly to extinction. A unique partnership has returned this native icon to the shortgrass prairie of northern Colorado.

WYOMING
COLORADO



THE LARAMIE FOOTHILLS BISON CONSERVATION HERD

A SMALL GROUP OF AMERICAN BISON was reintroduced to northern Colorado on Nov. 1, 2015. Bison had not roamed this portion of their historic range for about 150 years.

The herd is living and growing about 25 miles north of Fort Collins, at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, managed by the City of Fort Collins, and adjacent Red Mountain Open Space, managed by Larimer County.

These bison, representing the largest land animal in North America, are grazing on about 1,000 acres of fenced public property. About 700 acres are within Soapstone Prairie Natural Area; about 300 acres are in Red Mountain Open Space. With funding, the pasture could eventually expand.

Visitors may view the bison from roads and designated trails; to ensure safety, visitors may not enter fenced bison pastures.



A BISON HERD WITH VALUABLE GENETICS

THE LARAMIE FOOTHILLS BISON CONSERVATION HERD descends directly from heritage bison in Yellowstone National Park.

This is notable because bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area are often afflicted with an infectious disease called brucellosis, which can also harm elk, cattle, and people. Brucellosis has been a barrier to moving American bison directly from Yellowstone.

That barrier has remained, even though Yellowstone bison are valued as part of our Western heritage, for the species diversity and vigor they add to natural prairie ecosystems, and for the distinctive genetics they may supply to conservation herds.

Northern Colorado conservationists wanted to overcome the problem. They asked: How can bison with valuable Yellowstone genetics be restored to another part of their native range without bringing in disease?



A Colorado State University graduate student works with bison embryos in the laboratory of reproductive scientist Jennifer Barfield.



PARTNERSHIP SOLVES PROBLEM: CONSERVATION WITHOUT DISEASE

ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES were the innovative solution needed to establish the Laramie Foothills Bison Conservation Herd – a herd with the valuable genetics of Yellowstone bison that also is free from disease.

The technologies provide a scientific workaround and include:

- A laboratory procedure to cleanse semen collected from bison bulls, ensuring disease-free offspring;
- Artificial insemination of bison cows with clean semen;
- in vitro fertilization to produce disease-free bison embryos;
- Transfer of disease-free embryos to healthy surrogate bison mothers.

The core partners in this project are:

- City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department
- Larimer County Natural Resources Department
- Wildlife/Livestock Disease Investigations Team, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- Animal Reproduction and Biotechnology Laboratory, Colorado State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

THE LARAMIE FOOTHILLS BISON CONSERVATION HERD began with a shared vision for species restoration on city and county lands. Veterinarians with USDA-APHIS, who are based in Fort Collins and have studied brucellosis in wild and domestic animals, contributed their knowledge and several Yellowstone bison quarantined for more than a decade. CSU scientists are providing reproductive technologies, which were first developed for horses and cattle; these techniques are essential to propagating the herd while also halting disease.

Other contributing partners are: CSU Warner College of Natural Resources, Denver Zoo, and the Folsom Grazing Association.



Named for a mountain ridgeline that spans northern Colorado and southern Wyoming, the Laramie Foothills Bison Conservation Herd took its place on the prairie Nov. 1, 2015.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

www.fcgov.com/naturalareas

www.larimer.org/naturalresources

THE BISON NEED YOUR HELP!

Please consider a donation. Your contribution will help pay for fencing, animal-handling facilities, veterinary and laboratory staff, and supplies needed to care for the Laramie Foothills Bison Conservation Herd.

TO DONATE, VISIT

<https://advancing.colostate.edu/BISON>

or call (970) 491-2969.



Guests from the Crow Nation of Montana helped celebrate the bison's return.